**MARKETING OF EGGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1945**

**Legislative Assembly, 3 October 1945, pages 394-7**

Second reading

**The Hon. G. F. JENKINS (Newcastle— Minister of Agriculture)—**Members will probably recall that when the Marketing of Eggs Bill was before the House two or three years ago, it was provided that it should terminate at the conclusion of the war in Europe. Since then several changes have occurred, and although the European war has finished and the war against Japan is over, no proclamation has been issued by the Commonwealth Government to that effect. However, the war has actually ended and it has become necessary for us to decide whether we shall continue the legislation passed for the marketing of eggs in this State or whether it should be terminated. The purpose of the Bill before members is to make the legislation permanent. The Parliamentary Draftsman’s report on the Bill is as follows:—

"The only object of this Bill is to remove the time limit on the operation of the Marketing of Eggs Act, 1941. That Act was passed before Japan came into the war and the time limit was expressed in the following words:—‘This Act shall remain in operation until the expiration of six months after the Governor-General of the Commonwealth issues a proclamation declaring that the war with Germany existing at the time of the passing of this Act has ceased" In view of the events which have recently taken place in Europe the time when the Commonwealth will be in a position to issue the proclamation is drawing near, and therefore those who are charged with the administration of the Marketing of Eggs Act cannot be sure how long the Act will last. Under the present law they have no control over this matter. The Government has decided that in view of the nature of the operations in which the board is engaged that it is desirable to remove the time limit, and therefore proposes to amend the principal Act so as to provide that it will remain in operation until Parliament otherwise provides.”

Mr. Thompson—Does that mean permanent control ?

The Hon. G. P. JENKINS—Yes, until Parliament decides otherwise.

Mr. Thompson—I thought the producers did not want permanent control.

The Hon. G. P. JENKINS—Producers generally are a sensible body of people and are just as human as other people.

Mr. Thompson—I do not object to control.

The Hon. G. P. JENKINS—When the legislation was before the House previously, many people questioned the wisdom of agreeing to it. Great exception was taken, not only by some producers, but also by storekeepers, particularly in the metropolitan area. Objection was also raised by consumers of eggs who purchased from storekeepers in the metropolitan area, because they were of opinion that all the difficulties which arose, including shortages and the fact that there was a considerable demand from the fighting services for ,dried and other forms of egg, would mean that some of them would have to go a little short. As time progressed it was shown that the board set up in South Australia had handled the position remarkably well.

I pay a tribute to Mr. C. P. Anderson, chairman of the South Australian Egg Board, and those associated with him for the work they have done in this connection. It is pleasing to know that Mr. Anderson is not only held in high esteem in South Australia, but also in high regard in other States which recognize that the work associated with the Egg Board has been done remarkably well in this State. There are a few facts in connection with the marketing of eggs which I think proper the House should know. Section 35 of the Marketing of Eggs Act provides:—

“This Act shall remain in operation until the expiration of six months after the Governor-General of the Commonwealth issues a proclamation declaring that the war with Germany existing at the time of the passing of this Act has ceased.”

When the legislation was before Parliament, Australia was not then at war with Japan. The South Australian Egg Board is now acting as agent for the Controller of Egg Supplies, who is operating under National Security (Egg Industry) Regulations. The board under the present Act is working under difficult Conditions. The programme for the year 1945-46 is now being framed and, unless the board is assured of the continuity of operations, the programme involving various contracts for the disposal of

1. eggs in shell overseas;
2. (b) dried egg powder for the Services, and
3. (c) egg pulp for interstate and local consumption, will be difficult to complete.

During the first period of physical operation of the board, that is from August 10, 1942, .to July 3, 1943, receivals of the board were 6,926,009 dozen of the value of £418,445, while for the year ending June 30,1945, receivals of the board were 11,126,539 dozen, the gross value of which was £929,066. That is an indication of the tremendous increase in the number of poultry kept by producers in this State. The average return on eggs per dozen to the producer for year 1941-42 to year ending June 30, 1945, has increased by approximately 4d. a dozen. This has stabilized the industry from the producers’ viewpoint and in addition has been of considerable benefit to the State. Under conditions which existed previously, at certain periods of the year in time of great plenty it was difficult for producers to dispose of eggs except at sacrifice values, while at other periods of the year extraordinary prices were paid for eggs. The result of the board’s operations has been a stabilized and more reasonable price to the producer, and the consumer has not had to pay extreme prices at certain periods of the year.

Mr. Thompson—I do not think 2s. 4d. a dozen is cheap.

The Hon. G. P. JENKINS—As a producer I do not want to see eggs cheap. I want to see people producing eggs and other goods get a reasonable price. Cheap eggs are no good to the producer and sometimes not much good to politicians. The poultry industry under board control has been gradually expanding and the producers have, in view of the increased production, confidence in the future of the industry and the board control.

In the post-war marketing there will be many difficulties concerning the poultry industry when the change over from the marketing of eggs in the form of dried products, which have been entirely used by the Services in Australia, to the overseas marketing of eggs in shell takes place. This will necessitate careful marketing in order to avoid serious disruption in the industry.

In the present spring, that is 1945, part resumption to peace-time marketing will be the packing of eggs for overseas export as eggs in shell to Great Britain. I am pleased to say that there is already a shipment of fresh eggs arranged to take place from South Australia to Great Britain this .month. I hope that these shipments will continue. A shipment of a considerable quantity of egg pulp has also been arranged. It must be remembered that the market for dried eggs is likely to be lost to a great extent, because the dried egg industry was more or less a wartime necessity, although no

doubt it served a useful purpose. It is expected that there will possibly be work for only one plant in Australia. The most up-to-date egg- drying plant operating in Australia at present is in Adelaide and we hope that if one plant only is to be kept in operation that will be the plant which is now operating in South Australia.

The expansion of the poultry industry has not been confined during wartime to South Australia, but has been the experience of practically every State in the Commonwealth, and production has increased to approximately 20 per cent over all Australia. This means that unless some organized marketing control is in operation, South Australia will be fighting hard to retain her markets in the eastern States in the post-war period. Under the present form of control producers in South Australia have received exactly the same price per dozen eggs for the same grade as those in other parts of Australia, and this has undoubtedly been of marked advantage to the producers of this State.

The operations of the South Australian Egg Board have been financially successful. The general ideals of the board are now apparently quite satisfactory to the producers and to the storekeeper agents throughout the whole of South Australia who have now realized the advantage of board control, as the quantity of eggs produced has greatly increased and eggs have been .marketed in the country areas through storekeepers. The Retail Storekeepers’ Association, which is represented on the board, is now a sound supporter of board control. Its margins for retail have been definitely fixed and the competition in price to get supplies has been eliminated.

Mr. Stott—They opposed the Bill when it was introduced.

The Hon. G. F. JENKINS—A great number did. All country storekeepers and retail storekeepers in South Australia are allowed a fixed amount per dozen for handling eggs. The board has received and will maintain the closest co-operation and supply between the grading floors that handle the great bulk of eggs in the State as agents of the board. During the war there was a great expansion in the egg industry, not only in Australia but in other parts of the world which have access to the European markets. For instance, Canada increased her egg production enormously. This may mean a serious thing for poultry producers because, when all is said and done, those people who have been able to sell to Great Britain during the war enormous quantities of products which Britain needed, and have established markets there, will be in a favourable position to compete with us when normal trade conditions apply again. That is one of the problems which not only poultry producers but producers of all exportable products have to face in the future. Consequently, if we want to hold the markets in Great Britain which we had before the war, we have to produce the best goods possible and put them on the market in the most attractive form, or else in the competition which will take place we will have to face elimination, which would be a serious thing to our producers.

Mr. Stott—This Bill is only for six months after the proclamation of peace?

The Hon. G. F. JENKINS—The effect of the Bill is to make the legislation permanent,or for it to remain in force until such time as Parliament decides otherwise. I move the second reading.

The Hon. R. S. RICHARDS (Wallaroo Leader of the Opposition)—I realize the impor­tance of this measure and again take the opportunity of demonstrating that spirit of co­operation between the Opposition and the Government when matters of moment are raised. My mind goes back to the period just before the war and during the war when, in all the election campaigns right up to the present, the policy enunciated by the Party I have the honour to lead in this Chamber of a planned economy, stabilized prices and control of markets was ridiculed and condemned by members opposite and their supporters outside. One can imagine how satisfied and complimented I feel when no less a person than the Minister of Agriculture in a long statement eulogizes the policy we have elaborated from time to time.

I am not satisfied that the reason for introducing the measure was to cope with the, position which has arisen because Japan was not in the war when the legislation was passed. According to the terms of the last section in the Act there was no need for this Bill at. present. The proclamation of peace has not been issued and there is no need to introduce the Bill in order to be assured of the position in regard to such proclamation. I therefore assume that the Government, after having proved the efficacy of the scheme and established beyond doubt the wisdom of marketing boards, control, distribution and price stabilization, is desirous of making it a permanent feature in the economy of the State. That is a very high compliment to the policy which I have enunciated over a period of years.

There is one matter which should be reviewed at the same time as the Bill is considered. In the principal Act "producer” means a person who keeps 20 or more adult female fowls. Considerable discussion occurred in this place on this definition and some members sought to increase the number from 20 to 30, or even 50. Because of present Commonwealth regulations that definition does not apply, and now a person can keep up to 40 fowls without being called a producer. As that regulation seems to have worked admirably, I think the number in the definition of "producer” in the principal Act should be altered to 40. I always thought that 20 was an unreasonable number, especially for country districts. For the metropolitan area the position is different and because of congestion, there are good reasons why backyard poultry farmers should not be encouraged. I do not think I would be in order in moving an amendment to the Bill as printed. I think it would be necessary for me to move for an instruction to the Committee on the matter. I agree with everything the Minister said about the legislation. Its effect has been entirely different from that expected by those engaged in the poultry industry and by many members in this place. All people must be pleased with the result of the legislation. In order that I may look into the matter I have outlined, I ask leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted and debate adjourned.